

Writing the DBQ: A Six-Step Process

Step 1: Read the question. Make sure you understand all parts of the question and can break it down into its required categories and topics.

Step 2*: Construct a “working” thesis statement. State this thesis in the affirmative.

Step 3: Prepare to analyze the documents.

- a. Create “Yes / But” charts to test your “working” thesis against each category or topic.
- b. Create a list for any categories or topics that do not require a “Yes / But” chart.

Step 4: Read and analyze the documents.

- a. Use **MS HAP-P** to analyze documents and complete “Yes / But” charts.
 - 1) Begin by identifying the “**Main Idea**” and the “**Significance**.”
 - 2) After identifying the “Main Idea” and “Significance” choose at least one item of analysis from the acronym “**HAP-P**.”
 - H**istorical **S**ituation – Where and when was the document created?
 - A**udience – For whom was the document created?
 - P**urpose – Why was the document created?
 - P**oint of **V**iew (**POV**) – Who created the document?
- b. Jot down information from **beyond or outside the documents** that might be relevant to answering the question.

Step 5: Put everything together.

- a. Create a final thesis statement that addresses all parts of the question.
- b. Select information from six documents that will support your thesis.
- c. Select one or more elements of “HAP-P” from four documents to defend your thesis.
- d. Identify information from outside the documents that will help you defend your thesis.
- e. Prepare to address counterarguments and contradictory evidence.
- f. Prepare to address the historical context of the question’s topic by connecting it to a broader regional, national, or global development.

Step 6: Write the Essay. The DBQ should take a total of 60 minutes to answer. Spend 15-20 minutes on the first five steps. Writing the essay should take 40-45 minutes.

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***Instructions for DQBs that do not lend themselves to a “working” thesis statement.**

Step 2: Skip this step when the question does not lend itself to an easy-to-identify “working” thesis. If you skip this step, you will need to wait until you have analyzed some or all of the documents to create your thesis statement.

Step 3: If you did not create a working thesis in Step 2, wait until you have read some or all of the documents to create “Yes / But” charts to test your thesis.

Step 4: The significance of a document may not be identifiable until your thesis comes into focus. (With some document-based questions, you will not be creating “Yes / But” charts until after you have analyzed documents and your thesis has come into focus.)